PRESENTATION

The Multidisciplinary Studies Group on Religion and Social Action (GEMRIP) brings together men and women of diverse religious backgrounds who specialize in a wide range of disciplines within the social sciences, humanities, and theology. The group’s purpose is to create opportunities for students to gain awareness, reflect, and develop the theoretical and practical skills with which to respond to the challenges that modern societies present to social action that emerges from religious spaces and ecclesial communities.

GEMRIP emerged in response to the need within education and research institutions in Latin America to build bridges in research and practice between the religious phenomenon, faith, and the public sphere. In recent years studies in this field have increased, as have opportunities for social action organized by religious communities, as is demonstrated by their growing presence in diverse spaces within the public sphere. We believe, however, that the need remains to deepen and enrich the analyses and to coordinate the practices of these social agents and their efforts.

GEMRIP serves as a space for dialogue, education, and research whose objective is to assist individuals, groups, and institutions 1) in the study of the circumstances and issues presented by the public sphere and contemporary politics in relation to diverse modern religious phenomena, and 2) in their practice of social action as people and communities of faith immersed in complex and dynamic socio-political contexts.

GEMRIP proposes not only to assess the influence of these contextual factors on the religious world, but also to contribute to the particular input that religious communities offer in the public sphere by providing opportunities for consciousness raising, training in theory, and the development and analysis of specific social action projects.

How is GEMRIP unique?

An alternative perspective on social action, religion, and faith. We believe that religion and faith have public roles that are not limited to their relationship to those spaces, discussions, or institutions that are understood traditionally as explicitly political, including political parties, the State, or political rhetoric. Instead, we believe that religious communities—including their theological discussions and social and pastoral practices—possess a public role that is central in and of the particularities of their identity, that is, in their religious, pastoral, and theological character. In other
words, this entails identifying religious communities as spaces that create political imaginaries in their theological discussions, ritual actions, liturgical practices, and institutional organization.

On the other hand, the religious phenomenon has become considerably more diverse in recent decades, gradually claiming greater relevance in the public sphere. For this reason, all of these phenomena require new socio-analytical mediations and the development of practices of social action that aid in perceiving with greater clarity the political place of religion, studying the new dynamics emerging in the social field and their interrelations, and promoting new modes of interaction among these fields. We believe that traditional approaches in both the academic disciplines and the design of institutional actions—whether they are educational institutions, NGOs, or the State itself—have limitations and resist these new phenomena, especially in relation to the religious. For these reasons, GEMRIP commits to investigate, analyze, create, and promote new analytical frameworks and concrete actions starting from pertinent approaches that facilitate action within current contexts.

**Development of a public theology.** Since its origins, theological production in Latin America has been closely linked in dialogue with the social sciences in a profound examination of the socio-political challenges of the continent. GEMRIP wishes to advance this tradition starting from an alternative theological position that 1) evaluates current theoretical, methodological, and epistemological frameworks, as well as existing practices of social action, and 2) re-conceptualizes politics, social action, and activism with the objective of demonstrating and deepening the intrinsically public function that theology and religion possess.

**Build bridges among the disciplines of religion, theological education, research, and social action.** In addition to a team of professionals specializing in the study of the religious phenomenon from diverse academic fields, GEMRIP is unique in having direct contact with religious spaces since many of its members participate in different faith expressions. In addition, theology—a discipline that generally has little to do with the scientific field and the promotion of institutional efforts of activism—is an integral part of the frameworks the group develops. For these reasons, GEMRIP is distinctive, offering an alternative option for analysis, research, and mobilization of the religious discipline, with the participation of professionals in the social sciences, in theology, and in the public sphere.

**Vision**

*To be a leading educational institution in Latin America in the fields of religion, faith, and theology, and their relationship to the public sphere by means of multidisciplinary training presenting current pedagogical techniques, networking with diverse institutions and experiences, and theoretical and practical approaches sensitive to current socio-political circumstances.*
Mission

We create opportunities to increase awareness, raise consciousness, and engage in multidisciplinary training through educational programs and spaces of dialogue and reflection in the study of 1) socio-political dynamics in the contemporary context, 2) the relationships of these dynamics to the phenomena of religion and faith, and 3) strategies of effective social action starting from the perspectives of religion and faith.

Institutional Objectives

• Promote the analysis of the socio-political location of religion and its discourse from diverse fields in social theory, the humanities, and theology.

• Open spaces of multidisciplinary dialogue, awareness, study, and research for the study of the religious phenomenon in contemporary socio-political contexts.

• Develop a space for theological education and pastoral formation using tools that encourage a sensitive reading of communal realities.

• Collaborate with NGOs, educational institutions, and ecclesial communities in processes of evaluation and training in social action projects.

• Contribute to the field of theology and its relationship to the analysis of the public sphere.

Values

Sensitivity in perceiving and identifying the processes of change, the complexity of social realities and the particularity of each person or group that interacts with the institution in order to create a space of inclusion and acceptance to diverse points of view, cosmovisions, practices, and modes of thought.

Continuous Innovation in theoretical approaches, pedagogical methods, contextual analysis and institutional practices within the organization that enables processes of change and redefinition in response to the context of new social, academic, and pedagogical challenges.

Ongoing Dialogue as a constitutive practice in educational spaces (professors-professors, professors-students, students-students) and as a characteristic of the internal structure of the institution.

Academic Rigor demonstrated by the use of current pedagogical methods, pertinent theoretical approaches, and the treatment of topics sensitive to the present socio-political and religious context.
AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Center for Studies in Religion and Social Action

Since its inception in 2012, GEMRIP’s Center for Studies has been delivering courses and granting university-accredited diplomas, specializing in online presentation. More than 250 students from Latin America, North America, Europe, and Asia have already passed through its classrooms.

The diverse areas of study fulfill three objectives:
1. Bring together academics and fieldwork specialists
2. Develop research production
3. Develop courses and programs of study that correspond to its themes

The center’s curricular design is based on curricular themes (core ideas to be approached transversally in all programs and courses of each area) and problematizing intersections (specific issues to be approached in the programs starting from the particularities of the area and from the curricular themes.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work strategies</th>
<th>Curricular themes</th>
<th>Problematizing intersections</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Education:** formal and informal courses and opportunities offered fully online, in hybrid format, and face-to-face. | - Pluralism and diversity  
- Politics and social action  
- "Inter-" approaches (interreligious, intercultural, intergenerational, interethnic, interdisciplinary)  
- Gender and sexuality  
- Ecology and the environment  
- Peace and nonviolence | - Inequality and exclusion  
- Religions and states  
- Discrimination  
- Violence  
- Militarization, paramilitarization, and security  
- Human trafficking  
- Coexistence, migrations, states, and religious equality  
- Democracy and laicism  
- Corporativism and means of communication  
- Fundamentalisms  
- Totalitarianisms and nationalisms |
| **Research:** publication of thematic journals and books. | | |
| **Assessment:** working in conjunction with NGOs and educational institutions in processes of planning and institutional evaluation. | | |

**Areas of study**
- Postcolonial studies
- Theological studies
- Gender, sexuality and religion
- Religious studies
- Political religion and the public sphere
- Youth and childhood
**Programs**

Certificate Programs in:
- Contemporary Theological Studies
- Studies in Gender, Sexuality and Religion
- Religious Studies
- Religion, Politics, and the Public Sphere

45 independent courses on topics in each area.

Independent courses (30 credit hours – 6 thematic units in two months)
Certificate Program (120 credit hours – 4 consecutive independent courses)

New Certificate Programs starting in 2016:
- Youth, religion, and social action
- Planning and Evaluation of Theological Education
- Pastoral tools
- Community action
- Religion and the environment

**Publications**

**Academic journals**

*Religión e Incidencia Pública/Religion and Social Action*
ISSN 1853-1783

Issue 1 – 2013
(Con)texturas: lo público, lo religioso y sus abordajes/
(Con)texture: the public, the religious, and their approaches

Issue 2 – 2014
Religión y violencia: creencias, prácticas y discursos en las
microfísicas cotidianas/Religion and violence: beliefs, practices, and discourses in everyday microphysics
Horizontes Decoloniales/Decolonial Horizons
ISSN 2422-6343

Issue 1 – 2015
Contrarrestando las cartografías del poder. Teorías y prácticas poscoloniales, decoloniales y religiosas desde las Américas/Resisting the cartographies of power. Postcolonial, decolonial and religious theories and practices from the Americas

Books

El desafío del diálogo. Historia, definiciones y problemáticas del ecumenismo y la pluralidad religiosa/The challenge of dialogue. History, definitions and difficulties of ecumenism and religious pluralism

Author: Hugo Córdova Quero
GEMRIP, 2014
94 pages

Teología y espacio público/Theology and the public sphere

Author: Nicolás Panotto
GEMRIP, 2014
76 Pages
ISBN 978-987-33-6798-4
Social action and networking

GEMRIP sponsors conferences, panels, and workshops in conjunction with various organizations to provide opportunities for training and increased awareness of diverse themes focusing on gender, interreligious dialogue, religion and politics, and civic training.

Institutional agreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of the Latin American Educational Center - Argentina</td>
<td>University accreditation for all of GEMRIP’s academic programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegitimate Foreign Debt Program of the Lutheran World Federation - Argentina</td>
<td>Development of online courses and joint activities for consciousness-raising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Ecumenical Advisory and Service Center (CREAS) - Argentina</td>
<td>Organization of consciousness-raising activities, publications, and training programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Dialogues Publisher – Brazil</td>
<td>Publications and online courses in Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Leadership Programs (HLPs) at Princeton Theological Seminary – United States</td>
<td>Development of a joint Advanced Certificate in Multicultural Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GlobEthics - Switzerland</td>
<td>Creation of an online library of theology and ethics in Latin America, and collaboration on activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Vision – Latin America</td>
<td>Organization of training events and publications focused on political mobilization of youth in Latin America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American Interreligious Network of Education for Peace (RILEP)</td>
<td>Promote opportunities for interreligious dialogue in political spaces and public occasions in Argentina and the Southern Cone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecumenical Action - Venezuela</td>
<td>Publications on topics of religion and politics, and support for opportunities for local training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcolonial Network – United States</td>
<td>Publications on postcolonial theology from Latin America, organization of conferences and courses, and networking with institutions and organizations of the Majority World.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observatory of the South - Uruguay</td>
<td>Face-to-face courses, public forums, and dialogues on theology, religion, and politics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengthening and expanding the Center for Studies. The Center for Studies has been growing year by year, responding to the diverse challenges that arise both in academia and in the field. For this reason, we want to be responsive to the changing dynamics, preparing new modes of training appropriate to the needs that arise.

Therefore, the proposal for the next three years is:

- Launch four certificate programs focused on youth, contextual theology, interreligious pastoral dialogue, and ecology.
- Establish a master’s degree in theology.
- Strengthen the team of professors with opportunities for training, research and publication of course materials.
- Increase student enrollment.

Publication of journals and books. We wish to continue with the regular publication of each journal (one issue per year of Religión e Incidencia Pública, and two issues per year of Horizontes Decoloniales). We also project the publication of 10 books every three years.

Development of research groups. In partnership with educational centers and universities, we wish to promote the formation of research groups around topics related to GEMRIP, bringing together professionals, academics, and those who work in diverse social sectors. We plan to launch three year-long projects that will conclude with a publication (book or journal) and a public conference. The themes will be:

- 2016: Democracy, politics, and laicism in Latin America
- 2017: Gender, violence, and public policy: a micropolitical vision based in religious organizations and ecclesial communities
- 2018: Religious pluralism, politics, and social action: relations and interactions among State, civil society, religious communities, and NGOs.

Coordination of social action projects and events. We will continue to initiate joint work with religious organizations and churches on themes of social awareness.

- Youth training. In 2016 and 2017 we will organize different activities with the objective of bringing together young people from various Latin American countries in order to create opportunities for dialogue, training, and production in topics related to social mobilization and public action. To accomplish this, we envision a multi-stage process to integrate online efforts of promotion and increasing awareness on social networks, a training camp,

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1 The themes selected may change if urgent contextual or historical circumstances arise.
online educational programs, invitations to participate with NGOs and social projects, and assessment of work.

- Interreligious dialogue. We will organize events in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay working with diverse religious communities, political spaces, and organizations to raise awareness and deepen the dialogue about the importance of religion as a matrix for social transformation.

**Institutional enhancement.** We need to expand the work team that coordinates logistical, organizational, and directional planning, especially in the roles of general direction, academic coordination, secretarial work, and publications.

**Needs**

1. Academic scholarships for 30 students per year, either independent courses or courses for the certificate program.
2. Financing for publication and research projects.
3. Financing for social action projects (events, workshops, demonstrations).
Panel on Religion and Civil Law in Argentina (2013)

Panel on religion and abortion (2013)

Conversation on postcolonial theologies organized by GEMRIP (2014)

Panel on religion and politics with militant youth (2014)

Seminar “Laicism and Public Politics” (Montevideo, 2015)
Launch of GEMRIP Uruguay (2015)

Visit to the Uruguayan Ambassador to Argentina (2015)

Meeting of GEMRIP, CREAS and CLAI (2015)

Convention with World Vision Latin America (2015)

TEAM

Nicolás Panotto
General Director. Director of the academic journal *Religión e Incidencia Pública*

Stefanie Kreher
Academic Secretary and Coordinator of GEMRIP Uruguay

Nicolas Iglesias Schneider
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Oscar Cabrera
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Program Coordinator for Theological Studies and Publications